



Newsletter

President - Bob Crawford

I have been busy digesting a flurry of activity from the various departments of the NSW Government and understanding the pronouncements from the Federal Minister for Water Resources.

As a result, I am clear in thinking we as a people of the YCS must describe in detail the base flow of the Environmental Watering Plan (EWP) for the flora and fauna, indigenous and contemporary people's needs and especially the threatened species of our system.

It appears that when the Basin Plan 2012 was developed there was no recognition that our system was worthy of consideration.

Since then we have achieved a guaranteed End of System (EoS) target of 50ML/day. We know that a low flow regime EWP has been developed but not uplinked into the Murrumbidgee Water Sharing Plan.

I am asking for your support to develop a base flow regime EWP. This EWP concentrates on the conservation of our threatened species but also fosters many allied needs such as the food on offer for other critters and riparian dwellers including humans!

Preliminary work on the base flow regime EWP indicates that there may be an operational surplus flow in addition to the EoS target flow.

Just as Coleambally Irrigation and Murrumbidgee Irrigation are favoured by a special conveyance delivery clause in the Murrumbidgee WSP, I believe the YCS should be favoured by having its low and base flow regime, EWP and the EoS target of 50ML/day uploaded into the Murrumbidgee Water Sharing Plan. At least a YCS special clause favours the environment - the prime reason for the MDBA Basin Plan 2012.

WaterNSW - Yanco Weir Maintenance

After the announcement at the AGM about proposed maintenance of Yanco Weir, it has been agreed by WaterNSW not to commence maintenance on the weir before 2020. WaterNSW agreed to consultation sessions to be held between now and December. The proposed maintenance works are to replace the rubber seals and the retaining steel work on both gates at Yanco Weir. In addition, routine maintenance on gates and rollers is also to be completed. This requires raising the gates out of the water and installing scaffold to access the seals and steel work. While the gates are out WaterNSW is planning on carrying out preventative maintenance on the rollers and associated lifting gear that cannot be accessed when the gates are in normal operation.

It is estimated the maintenance outage would last 21 days from raising gates to reinstating. With time for drawdown, the supply impact could be up to 4 or 5 weeks. Work is proposed to be carried out by a combination of WaterNSW staff and contractors working 10-hour days seven days a week. More details will be in the next newsletter and via email.



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EMAIL OPTION

- Would you prefer to receive this newsletter via email to take advantage of the links to additional information?
- Please contact Tanya on **0408 833 801**

**Murrumbidgee
Environmental Water
Allowance Reference Group -
MEWARG**

- 1500ML set aside for Wanganella.
- Very dry conditions so watering will be limited.
- Yanga will not be filled.
- Ability to gain delivery access to wetlands is being discussed.

**Weed Identification at
Morundah**

Murrumbidgee Landcare and YACTAC are working together to present a field day in Morundah on:

Monday 14 October

- Focus will be on Silver Leaf Nightshade and other localised weeds.
- Riverina LLS will also be involved.
- For more details contact Dale.

THANK YOU

To all the people who have allowed access to their properties or made themselves available over the last few months for photography and/or interviews, YACTAC would like to shout out a big THANK YOU!

- We are compiling a promotional video with the assistance of Helene Mortlock to showcase our healthy ecosystem along with agriculture and community uses of the creek system.
- DPIE has been collecting photos for their upcoming productions, for example the images on the Community Engagement Plan consultation draft were all local images.

Environment Manager - Dr Dale McNeil

Create a Farm Dam Oasis on Your Place

YACTAC is undertaking a Farm Dams Wetlands project in partnership with the Riverina LLS and the Sustainable Farms project at Australian National University. We held an initial field day and information session near Morundah on 5 September with several local landholders attending the session.

YACTAC will support local farms to bulk up the habitat and water quality value of their farm dams and water storages. Changing the way stock access dams and providing native aquatic vegetation such as sedges, rushes, curly pond weed, ribbon weed and watermilfoil will provide the foundation of a productive pond ecosystem. This ecosystem will maintain good water quality and support frogs including some endangered species such the Southern Bell Frog and Sloane's Toadlet.

YACTAC is also talking to DPI Fisheries about using refurbished dams to foster rescued populations of endangered wetland fish like the small-bodied southern pygmy perch, olive perchlet and flatheaded galaxias as part of a species rescue mission.

Native birds of all kinds rely on farm dams in times of drought and building vegetation around and in our dams will bring in all sorts of birds including finches,



fairy wrens, kingfishers, rainbow bee eaters and more.

A couple of landholders at the very top of the Yanco have registered for a \$10,000 grant offered by the Riverina LLS to undertake fencing, access point works and vegetation. While this program is only available to those few in the Riverina LLS zone, we are working with Murray LLS to try to get support for farms along the creek system.

In the meantime, YACTAC will start working with some of our landholders to improve some of their dams as demonstration sites. If you have farm dams, even house dams that you would like to turn into a flourishing oasis for you and your family to enjoy, please contact me on 0428 1010 318 or mcneil.dale@gmail.com.



Mason Crane from ANUs Sustainable Farms Program talking about the restoration and ecology of good farm habitats.

Executive Officer - Tanya Thompson

We welcomed Henry Gregory, from Jerilderie, to the team to assist both Dale and myself for a few hours each week. Henry has worked for Landcare and holds qualifications in both the environmental and administration sectors.

It was great to see so many people attend the AGM this year. The presenters were informative and were available to talk to attendees after their presentations, which is always a good way to seek answers to any questions you may have.

YACTAC is recognised as the key stakeholder in the negotiations with DPIE - SDLAM Projects. This means we are in constant contact with David Leslie and his team. The recent Community Engagement Plan - consultation draft was a team effort with YACTAC feeling their input is valued and adopted. It is our vision to continue this journey with considered, appropriate and valued input from YACTAC to ensure the best possible outcomes are achieved.

At various meetings I have attended the same message has been presented:

- The SDLAM team is committed to transparent, accountable and meaningful engagement - vital to the ongoing project development.
- The advisory groups (see next page) will ensure local knowledge influences project outcomes.
- The SDLAM team will continue to work with community, interagency and inter-jurisdictional working groups to assess project options.

The next few months will be crucial to form the platform for stakeholder input and structure around Stage 1 milestones:

- Consult and develop
- Address identified impacts
- Prepare business cases
- Prepare designs, specifications and costings and operating plans
- Seek statutory approvals.

We need to get Stage 1 right as so many future decisions will be based on the outcomes of Stage 1.

MDBA and Local Members/Council Tours

During August two tours were organised with the SDLAM team, one for local members: Justin Clancy and Steph Cook, along with 5 Mayors and council representatives; and another for MDBA representatives: SDLAM Director Leah Ross, Digby Jacobs and 3 modellers. DPIE - Environment James Maguire and Rex Conallin, DPI Fisheries Luke Pearce, Wiradjuri elders Michael Lyons and Clem Christian also attended.

Both Yanco and Tarabah Weirs were visited along with a presentation at the Morundah Pub. It is all about spreading the message that we have a healthy creek system and we intend to keep it that way.



Commonwealth Environmental Water

- Nimmie Caira is getting most of CEWO's attention
- 2019-20 will use smaller volumes of water to maintain critical refuge habitats.
- Proposed to use 110GL in the valley, subject to availability.
- Supplementary volumes have been approved for use in the Murrumbidgee each year up to June 2024, when available: 21,986ML M'bidgee 393,117ML Lower Bidgee.
- The management planning for 2019-20 has been finalised, which is available on the website.

WaterNSW CAG

- Target loss 3% 2019-20
- Finley Escape renamed to Billabong Escape. Short term agreement with MIL.
- Yanco Weir road maintenance.
- NSW Fixed Fee Rebate - up to \$4000.
- Drought Stage 2.
- Commencing work on 2022-2025 IPART Pricing submission.

YACTAC Website

Google: landcare YACTAC

<https://landcare.nsw.gov.au/groups/yanco-creek-and-tributaries-advisory-council>

Murrumbidgee Landcare

YACTAC has joined this group with the hope that the top section of our footprint, around Morundah and to the north, will attract more attention and environmental funding.

They are recruiting new staff for a four year term and once they have their staff in place we will be looking at developing our relationship with them.

We have already been successful in gaining some workshops to be delivered in October.

If you have any ideas about programs or have areas of interest, please contact us.

WaterNSW Operations

- Murrumbidgee River will be ran lower this year.
- Operational rules for Darlot are not being complied with. Balranald and Darlot are run the same but the rules are different.
- DPIE - Environment and YACTAC have made a submission to WRP feedback to correct this anomaly.
- Up to 20-30% of YCS orders are downstream of Darlot.
- Trial reduced lead-ordering times below DC800 and Billabong Escape.
- Trial low flows in YCS to minimise operation surplus at Darlot.

I spy with my little eye

What Have You Seen? YACTAC is building up a Community Critters Database to record the cool critters that you bump into from time to time around the creeks and wetlands. As you encounter wildlife, I would love it if you could help me out by:

1. Taking a photo if possible
2. Record the location
3. Record the date and time of day/night you saw it
4. Tell me a story to go with it (e.g. Have you seen them before? Did your grandad tell you they used to be everywhere? Did you initially think it may be a bunyip?)
5. Text or email me.

This information will be built into a database so that we have something to take to government agencies to demonstrate how special and important our creek and wetland environments are.

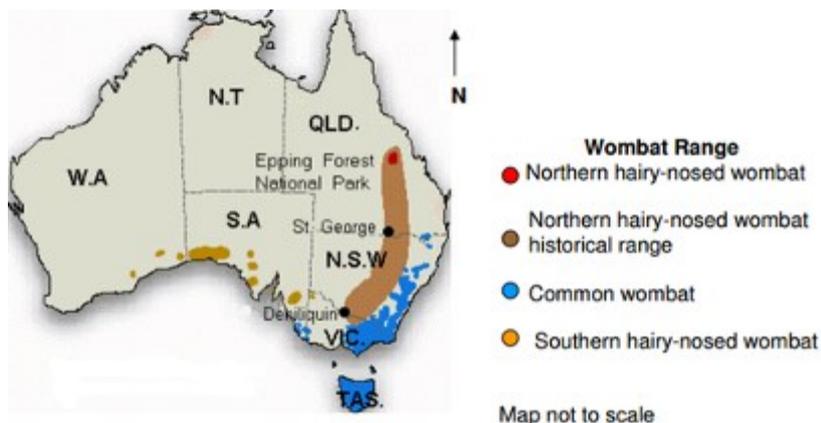
Each newsletter will include a creature feature section called **Y-SPY** (Y for Yanco) to update everyone on some of the treasures you have been finding out there. I'd love to hear your feedback and stories too.

Y-Spy

Our first Y-Spy was submitted by Caroline and Craig Heath at Wiraki at the Wilson Anabranch crossing. In October last year, Craig was out checking a center pivot at 2am when he came across a pair of wombats.

The interesting thing about wombats around the Billabong Yanco area is that this is the former distribution area of the critically endangered Northern Hairy Nosed Wombat, long thought to have contracted to a small population in central Queensland. Finding a Northern Hairy Nosed Wombat would be a big deal and attract a lot of support. However, this picture does look to me more like a common wombat, even though it is way north of its historic range, which reaches into north-eastern Victoria. If we can get some clearer pictures, we can work out whether we have a significant range extension for common wombat or, less likely, a remnant Northern Hairy Nosed Wombat.

Wombats are rarely seen in these parts anymore, but I have heard stories from octogenarians that their father said they were more common north of Deniliquin early last century. I wonder if their fence destruction and digging had anything to do with their demise. Dr Dale McNeil



SDLAM - Stakeholders Advisory Group

At last the community has an opportunity to collaborate on planning discussions to be held about two SDLAM projects influencing the Yanco Creek System:

- Improved flow management works - Regulator
- Modernising supply systems for effluent creeks

Comprehensive stakeholder engagement, detailed investigations and planning approvals will be required before the projects can progress to implementation.

The draft Yanco SDLAM Community Engagement Plan is on public display at the libraries in: Narrandera, Jerilderie and Deniliquin. You can provide feedback and ideas about this draft communication engagement plan via an online survey, email or letter. Contact Rod Hardwick: 0436 461 868 for details.

Drop In Sessions were held between 9 - 12 September at Moulamein, Deniliquin, Wanganella, Conargo, Jerilderie, Morundah, Urana and Narrandera.

Project Advisory Groups

Individuals/groups can nominate to join the **Community Advisory Group-YCAG** and **Aboriginal Advisory Group-YAAG**. The purpose is to voice your or your groups opinions on a range of issues about the projects and to gain a triple-bottom-line outcome (environmental, economic and social).

Key aspects to consider in respect to membership of the advisory groups:

- daytime face-to-face meetings rotating between Narrandera and Deniliquin
- the frequency and number of meetings required is not fixed but may initially be monthly and become less frequent as the projects progress
- each meeting is expected to run in excess of 4 hours
- members will need to commit to comment on written material, participate in workshops and for bringing messages to and from their own constituents
- membership will be reviewed every 12 months
- details on the advisory groups can be found in the draft terms of reference.

To nominate for membership of the YCAG or YAAG please address the following points:

- Explain how your group or organisation may be impacted by the Yanco SDLAM projects.
- Describe how your group or organisation is in a position to support or prevent the success of the Yanco SDLAM projects.

Please address the following points in your response:

1. Capacity to Network
2. Capacity to Communicate
3. Capacity to Contribute
4. Geographic Knowledge
5. Core Interest

In your response, please include the advisory group you wish to nominate for and include contact details of two people proposed for nomination on the advisory group.

Ring or email Rod Hardwick to assist you in your application: 0436 461 868

rod.hardwick@industry.nsw.gov.au.

[apply online](#) or written responses are to be sent to:

DPIE
SDLAM Projects
PO Box 205
DENILIQIN NSW 2710

Submissions close 5:00 pm Friday 27 September 2019.

WaterNSW ROSCCo

- River Operations
Stakeholder Consultation
Committee

Difference between CAG and ROSCCo: ROSCCo's are meant to drill deeper into operational issues rather than a NSW presentation.

- Opinion: This type of content used to be covered by CAG when the meeting went for a day instead of a half day.
- Will meet in the afternoon of the CAG meeting.
- Effluence creeks and ana-branches to potentially receive block releases.
- Maximise DC800 and Billabong Escape to meet water orders/system demands.

Independent Social & Economic Panel

- Assess the impact of the Basin Plan on the vulnerability resilience and adaptive capacity of basin communities and their potential for development and growth.
- Explore a range of options for stimulating, fostering and promoting healthy and sustainable communities, having particular regard to the impact of the loss of productive water resources.
- Opinion: YACTAC attended the Deniliquin meeting and came away thinking this exercise is not going to change anything.

**YANCO CREEK AND TRIBUTARIES
ADVISORY COUNCIL INC.**

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Glen Baxter 0428 852 623

Middle Section Committee:

Sam Armytage 0427 534 622
Russell Ford 0429 425 798
Mark Wettenhall 0427 861 825

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Sally Dye 0427 875 940
Colin McCrabb 0428 847 558

Executive Officer

Tanya Thompson 0408 833 801

Environment Officer

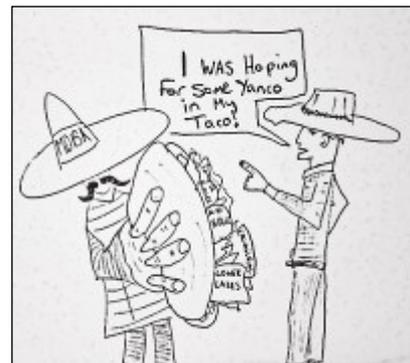
Dale McNeil 0428 101 318

Please contact us to discuss any matter regarding the creek system, riparian areas or concerns you may have.

If you know of any change of ownership of property please send details to the Executive Officer, so our records can be kept up to date.

Talking Taco with the MDBA

The MDBA released its second Basin-Wide Environmental Flows Strategy for public comment last month with YACTAC providing a submission about the Strategy and its associated models and plans. The Basin-Wide Plan was pitched at a very broad level, talking about using environmental water to connect rivers and wetlands and to support waterbirds, fish and water quality across the Basin.



YACTAC had a few concerns about the lack of detail about how this strategy can address specific issues in localised waterways, such as our creek system.

Our submission raised concerns that there are no environmental values attached to our creek at all. While the flow gauge at Darlot is recognised in the plan, the Yanco Creek System (YCS) environmental values are not recognised in the mid and lower Murrumbidgee plans. This means water taken from the YCS, to water the Murrumbidgee wetlands, would cause no “measured” environmental harm but would provide a measurable environmental benefit.

As a result, any comparison between our environment and others in the region are flawed with us always coming out behind. This goes back to how our systems were modelled under the Basin Plan and goes a long way towards explaining why projects such as the Sustainable Diversion Limit Adjustment Mechanism (SDLAM) were so easy for WaterNSW to pitch as providing ecological benefits and water savings.

By submitting this paper to the MDBA YACTAC hopes to bring more attention to our situation and start to address the issues that have led to us looking like a great place to take water from.

These messages were further discussed when some of the MDBA scientists and managers visited recently. This shows a great commitment from the MDBA to start listening to us and to start getting the YCS into the Basin Plan, into their models and acknowledging our environmental values in their watering strategies and water savings projects.

By building up these messages and delivering them to the right sections of government, YACTAC will continue to deliver your messages and concerns about environmental water delivery and the Basin Plan as it directly affects our creek environment. It's a great sign that they are coming out here to meet us and listen to what we have to say. Dr Dale McNeil.

A big 'thank you' to members of the Colombo Ski School who provided access to the facility and a skier, on a cold winter's day, for a recent photo tour for DPIE.

